



INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL LEVEL OF EDUCATION ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN SIKALAME ZONE, SIAYA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Parental involvement in pre-school education still remains questionably low when it comes to promoting pre-school children's education amidst the diverse family backgrounds in the current generation. Parents have shown mild and inconsistent involvement in their children's educational activities leading to poor academic achievement. Sikalame zone which is the location of this study has been facing challenges of low community and parental involvement which has contributed to the neglect of early childhood development centers. The study therefore aimed at finding out the extent of parental involvement in pre-school activities and establishing the influence of parents' level of education on their involvement in pre-school activities. The study was guided by Joyce Epstein theory of parental involvement. Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The study had a target population of 42 preschool teachers and 450 parents with preschool children in Sikalame zone. All the teachers of the selected pre-schools were involved in the study. A simple random sampling technique was carried out to select 90 parents who were included in the sample, resulting to a total sample size of 126 respondents. Questionnaires for both teachers and parents were used to collect data. Collected data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The analyzed data were presented using bar-graphs, tables and pie charts. Findings revealed that majority of parents did not get involved in their children academic activities and rarely assisted their children with homework implying that parents were not fully engaged in their children's education. The chi-square test results showed that the level of involvement in the children's education had

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significant association with parent's level of education. The study concluded that parents' level of education influenced their involvement in preschool education in Sikalame zone. The study recommended that there is need for the preschool administrators to provide some form of training to parents, so that their involvement will have a meaningful impact on the children's development.

Keywords: preschool; involvement; parents; education

1. Introduction

Parental involvement in children's school activities is the active participation of parents in schoolwork. The parents consciously engage in school activities that help promote their children's academic performance. Studies in Norway have indicated that parents' involvement in homework has significant influence on children's academic achievement (Mark, Cresswell & Ainly (2006); Epstein (2001); Hornby (2011)). This is also supported by studies from Latin America (Desarrollo (2007); Epstein (2000)) which reported that parental involvement creates a conducive environment for improved pupil performance. In addition, Osei-Akoto, Chowa, and Ansong (2012), who investigated the extent of parental involvement in academic performance in Ghana, indicated that majority of the parents hardly assisted children in homework. Despite these studies reporting that parental involvement in activities such as homework was limited, they were conducted in different geographical location from the current study hence the need to investigate whether a similar trend existed in Sikalame zone.

The parent's involvement however is influenced by the kind of parenting for instance some parents show commitment either at school or home while others commit themselves both at home and at school. In the developed countries such as the USA, evidence of parental involvement in education exists both at home and within the school (Education Department, 2004). It is therefore important that teachers communicate to parents regarding their children's progress at school through establishing a constant communication and meeting to discuss children's school performance (Cox (2005); Abouchaar & Desforjes (2003); Epstein (2001); Eccles & Harold (1993)). These studies were concerned with parents who involved themselves at home or school and the communication strategies that teachers use to inform parents of their children progress. However, they did not identify ways that parents involved themselves in preschool activities; hence the need to investigate level in which parents involved themselves in preschool educational activities.

In Latin America, parental participation is only perceived as effective if they engage with their children outside of the school consistently on those activities that focus on the enhancement of their discipline and academic performance (Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006). A study carried out by Desforjes and Abouchaar (2003) opined that parental involvement in learners' academic performance refers to different activities which include: good parenting at home and providing the necessary assistance with homework. Zoppi (2006) concurred with this by positing that parental involvement in

learner's academic performance was a wholesome term that means they participate by responding to school obligations, giving encouragement, supervise their homework, model the desired behavior, and provide supplementary tutoring. These studies were conducted in different geographical locations and there was need to conduct the current study to establish level in which parents involve themselves in preschool educational activities in Sikalame zone, Siaya County.

Generally, parental involvement in learners' academic performance can be categorized into two; school-based and home-based involvement. Zoppi (2006) determined that school-based involvement is further divided into two; explicitly school communication involvement which refers to direct contact with their child's school particularly with the teachers. The second school involvement is actively participating and volunteering for activities within the school and school activities and establishing regular attendance of school functions and being active during decision making. According to Zoppi (2006) the provision of material resources such as catering for teaching materials, school buildings or furniture and fittings maintenance constitute a vital part of school-based involvement too. This study investigated school-based and home-based parental involvement while the current study explored specific levels of parents' involvement in preschool education activities whether at home or school.

Parhar (2006) emphasizes that parental involvement in children's education leads to transformation of the parents from being passive education supporters to proactive members of the school community and society in general. Moreover, if learners can perceive their active participation and support towards their learning between home and school, they too become excited. As a result, they thus tend to realize the importance of learning, and consequently their intrinsic motivation for learning increases. Findings from research also show that if learners' parents are actively involved in the education of their children then their attendance, achievement, discipline and health improve remarkably. Parhar (2006) confirms that parental involvement in their children's education is a strong predictor of the learners' overall academic performance. Therefore, if the child is to achieve more, the parent likewise must be more involved in their learning. Hence, there was need to investigate level in which proactive parents involved themselves in preschool children education activities.

Epstein and Dauber (1991) came up with a classification that characterizes how parents can be involved at school. According to them, parents need to keep in contact with the teachers so that they can find out all the curriculum activity areas that children learn at school. This would help them effectively assist children in the subject areas while the children are at home. It is therefore important that parents should be provided with information and skills that would enable them help their children have a learning environment at home. At home learning activities promote children's school performance. Once the parents are empowered, they can easily assist their children in school activities such as homework and other curriculum related activities. As they assist the children, it is also important that they monitor their children's academic progress.

Apart from families establishing a home-learning environment, Epstein and Dauber (1991) state that they should make frequent visits to their children's school especially at transition points to pre-school. This includes frequent discussions/communications with the children and teachers about school activities. Furthermore, children's progress should be made a continuous and frequent activity for it to create an impact on children's education. Parents can make constant communications with teachers for example through media like notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters among others. Seminars and workshops can also be organized for the parents and teachers to discuss methods of effective communication on the children's progress at school. This should start by ascertaining to parents that it is important and a required part of their child's educational success (Goodall & Harris, 2007). A study exploring parental perceptions of their level of involvement in preschool activities was, therefore, necessary.

1.1 Extent of Parental Involvement in Preschool Activities

Most parents only get involved in their children's education activities when faced with urgency or probably when the teachers encourage them to participate. In addition, while most literature highlights that parental involvement makes a significant difference to education achievement in children, there is still need to know more about the ways in which parental engagement can be enhanced and facilitated across different sectors of society and different family backgrounds (Goodall & Harris, 2007). Therefore, levels in which parents participate in pre-school children's activities needed to be explored.

Other African countries including South Africa, Uganda and Burundi, have also put in place policies that support parental involvement in education. For instance in South Africa, the Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) requires all public schools to have elected School Governing Bodies consisting of the head teacher, teachers, parents and pupils (Dubbeldan, 2000).

Recently, the Basic Education Act of Kenya (2013) was enacted requiring the school Boards of Management to assess school needs with full participation of parents. This called for parents to get involved in both curricular and co-curricular school activities such as sports day, prize giving, educational workshops and seminars alongside frequent annual pupils, parents and teachers meetings (Cox 2005; Abouchaar & Desforges 2003; Epstein 2001; Eccles & Harold 1993). Despite availability of this clear policy statements urging parents to get involved, and enumerating possible ways they can use, it is not clear whether parents in Sikalame zone have adopted them and their levels of involvement.

Low parental involvement in collaborating with pre-school (Ndani, 2008) or absence of the parent in these activities as noted by Koech (2010) often discourages children and makes them feel neglected or less important. It's therefore important that parents get close to their children and establish a positive relationship with their children besides embracing good parenting skills to encourage their children. This also enhances parental participation in pre-school activities that promote children's education (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009). In spite of the emphasis put on parental

involvement and benefits that children derive from parental involvement, levels of parents' involvement in preschool education activities, particularly in rural settings such as Sikalame Zone are limited.

School meeting with the teachers which has been largely ignored by most parents enhances children's learning as stated by Cox (2005). Besides meeting with teachers to check on pupils progress and attending school meetings as have been noted in most cases, parents should also actively participate in extracurricular activities like; concerts, sports, scouts, which in one way or another relates to children's reading, general knowledge, and mathematics knowledge and skills (Reaney, Denton, & West, 2002). These studies emphasize on extracurricular ways in which parents can get involved in their children schooling in general while the current study focused on levels of parents' involvement, particularly, in preschool children's educational activities.

Research has also shown that parents with good educational background find it easier to contribute to their children's education as they feel part of the education process unlike those parents who never attended school. In a study by Sclafani (2004) it was determined that white female learners, especially those who had a mother who had earned a degree in education were most likely to be successful amongst peers in academic achievement (Sclafani, 2004). This study was conducted in white cultural environment. A study exploring black-African parents' level of education and its influence on their involvement in preschool children education activities was necessary. Moreover, behaviorist theories suggest that children learn from their immediate environment and possibly parents since they are the first people that children learn from (Sclafani, 2004). This social process of learning is much more enhanced when the parent develops a sense of involvement in helping the children acquire social skills as early as during the infancy stage. Parents who are educated beyond secondary level according to Sclafani (2004) are found to be more involved with their infants than those who never completed secondary school. These parents who never completed secondary school tend to display a lot of dissatisfaction and stress that make them fail to adequately attend to their children's educational needs or even give them an opportunity to explore (Sclafani, 2004). This study investigated involvement of only parents who did or did not complete secondary school while the current study sought to explore involvement of all types of parents, that is, without any education background up to those with university education.

Dauber & Epstein (1991) also echo the sentiments that parents are the first teachers of the child. Parents thus feel indebted and would want to assist them with schoolwork like guiding children with the homework, assignments and other relevant skills and references. However, as much as some parents feel they want to be involved in their children's school activities, they lack the required knowledge and skills to get involved (Kohl, Lengua, & MacMahon, 2000). Further research was therefore necessary to establish influence of parental education on their involvement in preschool children's education activities.

In addition, parents with low educational attainment mostly do not care to support or supervise their children's progress at school due to failure to recognize the

importance of monitoring children's academic progress. Most of the parents also lack adequate knowledge to face challenges that may arise in children's education process. This discourages the parents and they may opt not to participate in children's school activities leading to high school dropouts (Sanders & Epstein, 2000). This study investigated influence of low parental education on involvement in education in general whereas the current study explored influence of both low and high extent of parental education on parental involvement in preschool education activities.

The level of education of parents' influence their involvement in their children's education as found out in studies conducted in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Mali. Colclough, Al-Samarai, Rose & Tembon, (2003) mentions that mothers who have attained some form of education positively influence their children's education through making informed decisions and also ensure that their children attend school in order to fit in the civilized society of the present. It's therefore evident that well-educated parents especially those who have earned a degree in education showed concern about their children's progress since they value education (Kathleen and Rose, 2001). This studies single out educated mothers and parents with a degree in education as being more likely to be involved in children's general education. It was necessary to explore involvement of educated fathers and parents with other levels of education in preschool education activities.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of parents' level of education on their involvement in preschool children's education activities in Sikalame education Zone of Siaya County.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey involves naturalistic observation and description of a behavior of a subject with respect to the variables influencing it. Orodho (2004) states that descriptive survey can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education issues. This design allowed the researcher to investigate the nature of parental involvement in Sikalame zone and strategies that teachers use to encourage parental involvement in preschool education.

The study targeted about 450 parents and 42 preschool teachers in Sikalame educational zone within the 18 public preschools in the zone. The target respondents comprised of the preschool teachers and parents/guardians with children in the preschools. The total target population therefore comprised of 492 respondents.

All the 18 preschools in Sikalame zone were purposively selected for the study. Consequently, the 24 preschool teachers in the 12 preschools were also purposively sampled and involved in the study. There were 6 preschools with more than two teachers. Simple random sampling by rotary method was used to select only two

teachers for the study, totaling to 12 preschool teachers. This yielded a sample of 36 preschool teachers.

On average, each preschool center had approximately 25 children which translated to a similar number of parents per preschool center. This resulted in a target population of 450 parents. By using preschool parent records, systematic sampling procedure ($n^{\text{th}} = 5$ parents) was used to select 90 parents who were involved in the study, representing 20% of the target population. An adequate number of subjects for a survey study are about 10% as suggested by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), hence the sample was deemed representative.

4. Instrumentation

The study employed questionnaires for data collection. The questionnaire was preferred due to its ability to gather a lot of data within a short time and increasing anonymity and confidentiality as respondents were not required to fill in their personal details on the questionnaire. There were two sets of questionnaires. One for the parents and another for the preschool teachers. The researcher used content validity and item analysis to establish the validity of the instruments by ensuring that each item in the instruments was related to the study objective. Reliability is a measure of consistency of the results from a test (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The researcher employed test-retest method to determine reliability. During the pilot study, a questionnaire was administered to the teachers and parents. After a week, the same questionnaire was administered to the same respondents and a comparison between their previous and latter responses made. The results from the two tests were correlated using the Spearman (rho) order correlation coefficient formula.

$$\rho = \frac{\sum_i (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum_i (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum_i (y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

For the questionnaires to be accepted, correlation coefficient of 0.7 was set. Spearman (rho) correlation coefficients for the two questionnaires were 0.782 and 0.788 and the two questionnaires were deemed reliable.

5. Findings and Discussions

Level of education is associated with general knowledge including benefits of involvement in preschool education activities. The study sought to establish the level of education of parents in Sikalame zone. Results are presented in figure 4.1.

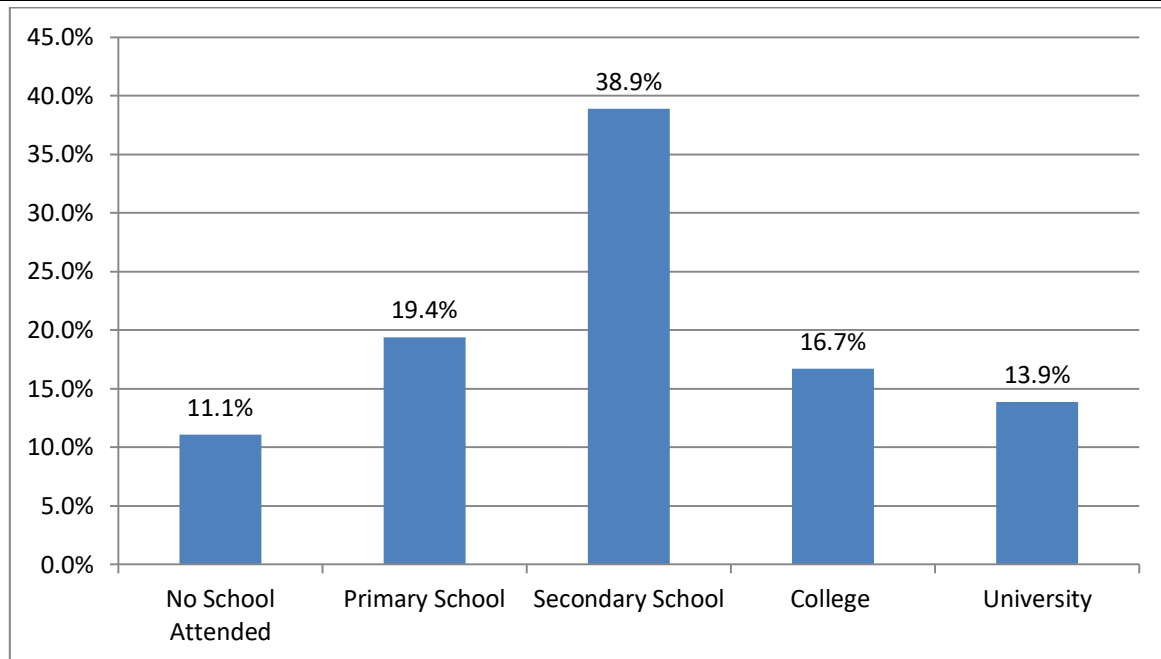


Figure 4.1: Parents' level of education

The data presented in figure 4.1 shows that majority (38.9%) of parents in Sikalame zone had attained secondary level of education while the rest had primary education (19.4%), college education (16.7%), university education (13.9%), and no school attended (11.1%). These findings mean that majority of parents did not have sufficient education to perceive education as a prime child need.

The current study also sought to establish the whether there is a significant relationship between parents' level of education and level of involvement in preschool education. The following hypotheses was generated and tested;

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between parents' level of education and parental involvement in preschool children's education activities in Sikalame zone.

The hypothesis was tested using chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Chi-square results for the relationship between parent's level of education and involvement in preschool children activities

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.029 ^a	89	.019
Likelihood Ratio	18.444	89	.308
Linear-by-Linear Association	.623	1	.439
N of Valid Cases	90		

a. 0 cells have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.74.

Data presented in Table 4.15 shows that the chi-square value for the relationship between parents' level of education and involvement in preschool children activities was significant (p value = 0.19). The null hypothesis was thus rejected and its alternative

accepted. This result mean that parents' level of education influence their level of participation in preschool activities, that is, a parent with high level of education is likely to participate in preschool education activities than those with low level of education.

These findings are in agreement with a study conducted by Kathleen and Rose (2001) that parents with good educational background find it easier to contribute to their children's education as they feel part of the education process unlike those parents who never attended school. Similarly, in a study by Sclafani (2004) it was determined that white female learners, especially those who had a mother who had earned a degree in education were most likely to be successful amongst peers in academic achievement.

In addition, the findings of this study are in line with a study by Sanders & Epstein (2000) who reported that parents with low educational attainment mostly do not care to support or supervise their children's progress at school due to failure to recognize the importance of monitoring children's academic progress. Most of the parents also lack adequate knowledge to face challenges that may arise in children's education process. This discourages the parents and they may opt not to participate in children's school activities leading to high school dropouts.

6. Conclusion

The findings showed that the level of parent education influence their involvement in preschool activities. That is, the higher the education of a parent the higher their involvement in preschool education activities. Therefore, it can be concluded that educated parents show higher level of involvement in preschool activities than the uneducated parents.

6.1 Recommendations

The study recommends that parents should access educational programmes including seminars, workshops, or literature materials teaching about parental involvement in children's education to keep them abreast of their role as parents in children's education.

On recommendation for farther research, the study recommended that there is need for a special study to categorize barriers of parental involvement in children's education based on different perspectives such as school-based and home-based. This criterion would assist to understand the challenges to parental involvement in children's education better by referring to specific environments.

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